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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the United States Department of Education's racial enrollment statistics for the 1980-84 period shows no significant increase in the segregation of black students in the U.S. For black students, the data suggest that the courts ignored the current Administration's policies against mandatory desegregation, and that the trends in segregation were very similar to what occurred during the Carter Administration. One of the measures used showed a slight increase in integration in the south during the first Reagan term. The data on Hispanic students show a continuation of a long-term trend of increasing school segregation in all regions of the country. Hispanics are now more isolated from non-Hispanic whites than are black students. Rapidly growing numbers of Hispanic students are attending segregated schools where fewer than a tenth of the students are white. White students are attending school with growing proportions of blacks everywhere outside the south and are in schools with higher average Hispanic enrollments in all regions. Black students continue to be most segregated in the northeast and midwest. Asian students attend schools that are far more integrated than those attended by other minority group students. (PS)

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NATIONAL SCHOOL DESEGREGATION PROJECT
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WORKING PAPERS

PAPER NO. 14

Are American Schools Resegregating in the Reagan Era? A Statistical Analysis of Segregation Levels from 1980-1984

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Executive Summary

The first analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's racial enrollment statistics for the 1980-1984 period shows no significant increase in the segregation of black students in the U.S. in spite of the Reagan Administration's advocacy of curtailing and reversing court orders requiring mandatory desegregation. For black students, the data suggest that the courts ignored the Administration's policies and that the trends in segregation were very similar to what occurred during the Carter Administration. One of the measures used in the study actually shows a slight increase in integration in the South during the first Reagan term.

The data on Hispanic students, however, show another pattern. It shows a continuation of a long-term trend of increasing school segregation in all regions of the country. On two of the three measures of segregation used in the study, Hispanics are now more isolated from non-Hispanic whites than are black students. Rapidly growing numbers of Hispanic students are attending intensely segregated schools where fewer than a tenth of the students are white.

White students are attending school with growing proporations of blacks everywhere outside the South and are in schools with higher average Hispanic enrollments in all regions. Black students continue to be most segregated in the Northeast and Midwest. Asian students attend schools that are far more integrated than those attended by other minority group students.

Introduction

Federal civil rights officials have been collecting statistics on the racial enrollment of U.S. public schools since 1968. Analysis of these statistics provides the basic information for understanding changes in the segregation of U.S. public schools. This analysis is the first to explore the changes during the first term of the Reagan Administration. The data the government collected in 1982 proved useless for serious analysis. The 1984-85 data obtained for this project permits systematic comparisons with earlier trends in school desegregation. The Reagan Administration's strong advocacy of basic changes in desegregation policy lends special significance to the examination of changes occuring during its first term in office. Surprisingly, however, the data shows very little visible effect of those policies. The basic trends from 1980-84 were very similar to the patterns established in the previous eight years. The considerable level of school integration in the South achieved by 1972 remained intact. There was no significant progress against the intense segregation of blacks in the Northeast and Midwest. As has been true since the late 1960s, Hispanics in all regions continued to become more segregated.

The Data Used in This Analysis of Desegregation Levels.

The 1984 Office for Civil Rights survey, on which the 1984 statistics in this report are based, collected data from 32,380 schools across the U.S. Of those schools 15.1% had no black enrollment, 29.0% had no Hispanic enrollment and 2.9% (945) had no white students. More than one-eighth of the schools (13.3%) had between 90 and 100 percent minority enrollment. The statistics reported in this study are not simply totals from those schools included in the OCR survey but are totals for all public schools projected from the survey data. The survey was designed in 1984, as it had been in previous years except 1982, to provide a sample of all schools projectable to the state, regional, and national levels. In four of the nation's largest public school systems, the totals for those systems were projected from a sample of their schools.

Desegregation Measures Used in this Study.

Desegregation can be measured in many ways. This report employs three basic measures, chosen because they are readily understandable, provide information on the kinds of schools students are actually attending, and are immediately comparable across regions, states and districts. This report defines desegregation as the extent of actual enrollment of minority and white students in the same schools. It measures segregation first by calculating the proportion of black or Hispanic students in a given area that are in schools where there are less than half white students or less than a tenth white students. The other

measure, the exposure index, shows the proportion of students of other racial and ethnic groups that are in the schools attended by typical black or Hispanic students.

These are measures of extent of actual desegregation at the school level. They are not adjusted to take into account the overall racial composition of the school district or the extent to which a particular district or state has achieved what is feasible within its boundaries. Those are important questions but the indices that have been devised to answer them often produce measures that are neither readily understandable nor possible to interpret from the standpoint of school level experience. The often used dissimilarity index, for example, is easy to misinterpret, particularly in districts with very high or very low white enrollments. Since it measures the randomness of distribution of a population within a geographic area, it would report perfect integration in a 96 percent black school district if all of the schools were 96 percent black, even though there are very few blacks or whites who would consider such a school integrated. Other proposed measures, such as weighted exposure indices, have some of the same problems, in addition to taking the district boundaries as a fixed rather than a contingent fact in the analysis of desegregation policy. Under both kinds of measure the same desegregation index number would actually reflect very different racial compositions of schools in different areas.

The measures that are used here do not show the

much greater difficulty of producing substantially integrated schools in regions with much higher proportions of minority students or in regions with much greater fragmentation of school districts within metropolitan areas. Readers should keep these questions in mind in interpreting the statistics. An earlier report from this project, "Racial Change in U.S. School Enrollments, 1968-1984" provides part of the necessary context for interpreting the statistics. This report does not show how hard districts or states or regions work at accomplishing desegregation. It does show, however, the extent to which they have achieved it. Subsequent reports, using the same measures, will explore desegregation trends at the state, metropolitan, and city levels.

Desegregation Policy in the 1980s. The Reagan Administration has had a strong and consistent policy toward school desegregation. The President, the GOP platform in 1980, both Attorney Generals, and the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division have expressed the view that the courts have gone too far and that primary reliance should be placed on voluntary desegregation. The Administration has opposed the idea that court orders should require actual achievement of a specified level of desegregation and has supported permitting urban districts now under busing orders to return to neighborhood schools. The executive branch and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission have become active critics of busing and of courts which order such remedies. During its first year, the Administration eliminated the major desegregation assistance program, the Emergency School Aid Act.

Civil rights groups have fought these policy changes and warned that they could lead to reestablishment of segregated education, particularly in the South where most of the desegregation enforcement efforts were concentrated. Demographic changes that have been producing a rising proportion of nonwhite students in U.S. public schools also increase the probability of resegregation since they produce a slowly rising proportion of minority students across the U.S. and a continuing expansion of ghettos and barrios to cover ever larger portions of central city school districts. This analysis began with the expectation that policy and

demography might well combine to produce a significant increase in segregation in the 1980s.

Stability of Desegregation for Black Students, 1980-84. Perhaps the most notable finding of these calculations is that the predicted trend did not occur. The overall level of integration for black students was changed very little during the first Reagan Administration. All of the policy changes and legal battles left the situation very much as it had been at the end of the Carter Administration. Tables 1 and 2 show that the percentage of black students across the U.S. and within each major region who were in predominantly minority schools and schools with less than a tenth whites changed only very slightly during these four years. In fact there was a small but signficant decline in segregation for blacks in the Northeast, probably accounted for by some progress in desegregation in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This was an interesting trend in the region where black students are most intensely segregated. The only significant increase in segregation levels by region came in the Border states where there was increasing segregation in Maryland for black pupils. Overall, however, the pattern was one of stability rather than change.

Table 3 shows the change in the percent of white students in the school of the typical black student during the period from fall 1980 to fall 1984. It shows a very minor overall change of less than a half percent. Once again, the data shows significant deterioration of desegregation

TABLE 1

Percentage of Black Students in
Predominantly Minority Schools, By Region
1980 - 1984

REGION	1980	1984	Percentage Change
South	57.1	56.9	-.2
Border	59.2	62.5	+3.3
Northeast	79.9	73.1	-6.8
Midwest	69.5	70.7	+1.2
West	66.8	66.9	+ .1
U.S. TOTAL	62.9	63.5	+ .6

TABLE 2

Percentage of Black Students in
90-100 Percent Minority Schools,
by Region, 1980-1984

REGION	1980	1984	% Change
South	23.0	24.2	+1.2
Border	37.0	37.4	+ .4
Northeast	48.7	47.4	-1.3
Midwest	43.6	43.6	0
West	33.7	29.4	-4.3
U.S. TOTAL	33.2	33.2	0

TABLE 3

Percentage of White Students in School Attended by Typical Black By Region, 1980-1984

REGION	1980	1984	% Change
South	41.2	41.0	- .2
Border	37.7	35.6	- 2.1
Northeast	27.8	27.7	- .1
Midwest	30.6	30.0	- .6
West	34.3	35.1	+ .8
U.S. TOTAL	36.2	35.8	- .4

levels only in the Border States. Even there, the change is relatively modest. There is no evidence of any substantial trend toward resegregation in the national and regional data.

The data in Table 4 showing the trends of both black and Hispanic segregation over a much longer period shows that the pattern in 1984 has changed little from that in 1972 for black students but it also shows that a very different pattern is at work for Hispanic students. The increasing segregation is coming not where it was widely expected but among a group whose educational isolation has received far less attention, the Hispanics.

Increasing Hispanic Segregation in the 1980s. Virtually all of the attention of the federal government to the enforcement of desegregation in the 1960s and early 1970s was devoted to desegregation of black students, particularly in the states with de jure segregation. Hispanic segregation was much less visible and few were aware that Hispanics had faced de jure segregation in the Southwest until after World War II. (Uribe, 1986). Hispanics were a far smaller proportion of public school enrollment, only 4.6% compared to the 14.5% who were black in 1968.

Since that time, however, the Hispanic population of public schools has grown very rapidly and their segregation has become steadily more severe, now clearly exceeding the black level of isolation on two of the three measures used in this study. At a time when there is abundant evidence of extremely serious educational problems in the Hispanic community (Valdivieso, 1986) it is important to closely

TABLE 4

CHANGES IN SEGREGATION OF BLACK AND HISPANIC STUDENTS IN THE U.S., 1968-1984

	Black Students	Hispanic Students
Percent in Predominantly Minority Schools		
1968	76.6	54.8
1972	63.6	56.6
1980	63.5	70.6
CHANGE 1968-1984	-13.1	+15.8
Percent in Intensely Segregated Schools		
1968	64.3	23.1
1972	38.7	23.3
1980	33.2	28.8
1984	33.2	31.0
CHANGE 1968-1984	-31.1	+8.9
Percent of White Students in School of Typical Black or Hispanic		
1970	32.0	43.8
1980	36.2	35.5
1984	35.8	33.7
CHANGE 1970-1984	+3.8	-10.1

examine these trends.

Since 1968, Hispanic student enrollment has grown by 79.7% while white enrollment has declined 19% and black enrollment has remained virtually unchanged. Hispanics accounted for 9.1% of all public school students by 1984 and the percentage is likely to continue rising. It is very important to determine the degree to which they are gaining access to the educational mainstream. The patterns shown in Table 4 show that Hispanics have become steadily more isolated during the 1968-84 period while blacks have moved in the opposite direction. 13% fewer blacks are in predominantly minority schools than in 1968 while 16% more Hispanics were attending such schools. Hispanics became more segregated than blacks according to this measure in 1978 and the gap has continued to widen in the 1980s.

Hispanics were in schools with substantially more whites in 1970 than were their black counterparts. By 1980, however, the pattern had reversed itself as the proportion white in the school of the typical Hispanic fell and the opposite trend affected blacks. During 1980-84, there was a slight increase in isolation for blacks according to this measure but a substantially greater increase for Hispanics.

Less than a fourth of Hispanics, but almost two-thirds of blacks in 1968 attended highly segregated schools where less than a tenth of the students were white. By 1984 the proportion of black students in this situation

had dropped by almost half while the proportion of Hispanics in this situation had increased by almost a third. The levels of intense segregation are now very close and the trends from 1980-1984 suggest that Hispanics may soon be more segregated than blacks according to this measure as well.

The regional data on Hispanic desegregation trends show that the increase in segregation is most dramatic in the West, where most Hispanics live, and in the Midwest, where the largest center of Hispanic migration is the greater Chicago area, which has been experiencing extremely rapid growth of Hispanic enrollment. By 1983, other calculations show, 85% of Chicago's Hispanic students were in predominantly minority schools and 53% were in schools with less than a tenth white students.(Weinberg, 1985).

TABLE 5

HISPANIC ENROLLMENT IN PREDOMINANTLY MINORITY SCHOOLS, BY REGION, 1980-1984

	1980	1984	Change 80-84	Change 68-84
South	76.0	75.4	-.6	+5.5
Border	*	*	*	*
Northeast	76.3	77.5	+1.2	+2.7
Midwest	46.6	53.9	+7.3	+22.1
West	63.5	68.4	+4.9	+26.0
U.S. TOTAL	68.1	70.6	+2.5	+15.8

*very small numbers of Hispanic students

TABLE 6

HISPANICS IN 90-100% MINORITY SCHOOLS, BY REGION, 1968-1984

	1968	1980	1984
SOUTH	33.7	37.3	37.3
NORTHEAST	44.0	45.8	47.1
MIDWEST	6.8	19.6	24.2
WEST	11.7	18.5	22.9
U.S. TOTAL	23.1	28.8	31.0

TABLE 7

PERCENT OF WHITE STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY TYPICAL HISPANIC STUDENT, 1970-1984

	1980	1984	Change 80-84	Change 70-84
SOUTH	29.5	29.5	0	-3.9
BORDER	66.4	63.5	-2.9	-16.7
NORTHEAST	27.0	25.8	-1.2	- 1.7
MIDWEST	51.9	47.5	-4.4	-16.1
WEST	39.8	36.6	-3.2	-16.6
U.S. TOTAL	35.5	33.7	-1.8	-10.1

The Impact of Administration Policies. Comparative analyses of the changes in segregation levels during the Carter Presidency and the first Reagan term suggest that Administration policies have had relatively little impact on the level of desegregation in public schools during the past decade. Further analysis of earlier statistics shows that there has been little change in desegregation patterns since there was a large increase in school integration between 1968 and 1972, when the Supreme Court dramatically rejected the policy of the Nixon Administration and forced rapid implementation of hundreds of desegregation orders in the Southern and Border states, many of which employed busing. Since that time the courts have been the dominant element in the desegregation process and the patterns of desegregation for blacks have been remarkably stable since 1972. The extraordinarily different policies of the Carter and Reagan civil rights enforcement officials produced only very small changes in levels of integration for blacks. The only Administration that appears to have had a large independent effect on segregated education is that of Lyndon Johnson, which played a large role in moving the South from a pattern of almost total segregation to the position of the nation's most integrated region by 1970, a distinction the South has retained.

The Carter and Reagan policies might have been expected to have very different consequences. The Carter policy was to support the desegregation requirements of the

TABLE 8

COMPARISON OF CHANGES IN SEGREGATION OF BLACK STUDENTS DURING THE CARTER AND THE FIRST REAGAN ADMINISTRATIONS

area	changes in segregation measures				
	% in predominantly minority schools		% in 90-100 percent minority schools		% of white students in typical school
	Carter	Reagan I	Carter	Reagan I	Carter - Reagan I*
South	+2.2	-.2	+ .6	+1.2	-.2
Border	- .9	+3.3	-5.5	+ .4	-2.1
Northeast	+7.4	-6.8	-2.7	-1.3	- .1
Midwest	- .8	+1.2	-7.5	0	- .6
West	- .6	+ .1	-2.6	-4.3	+ .8
U.S. TOTAL	+ .5	+ .6	-2.7	0	- .4

All tables compare changes from 1976-1980 with changes from 1980-1984. These changes actually cover the period from the fall in which the new Presidents were elected to the fall of the year in which they ran for reelection.

*these statistics compare the exposure index from the last year of the Carter term to the last year of the first Reagan term

Supreme Court and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Lawyers with experience in the civil rights movement occupied key positions in the Justice Department and the Department of Education. The Reagan policy has been to attempt to modify the policy of the courts away from mandatory desegregation requirements and to attempt to permit school districts to return to neighborhood schools. Both administrations, however, met considerable frustration in pursuing their policies. Congress drastically curtailed the authority of the Education department to require desegregation as soon as the Carter Administration moved toward cutting off funds from a large city. The Supreme Court left the law of school desegregation very unclear during much of the Carter Administration until the 1979 Dayton and Columbus decisions were handed down. The efforts of the Reagan Administration to limit or reverse school desegregation have had little impact on the hundreds of desegregation plans that were already in place when they took office.(Eagleton-Biden amendment, Cong. Rec., June 28, 1977: S10909-10) Throughout both Administrations the law remained generally stable and so did the segregation levels. The elected branches of government had relatively little visible impact.

The last major change in school desegregation levels came in the 1968-72 period, in response to a series of major Supreme Court decisions. During that period the Court ruled in 1968 that desegregation plans must actually produce integration not simply free choice, ruled in 1969 that no further delays were permissible in implementing desegregation,

and held in 1971 that large-scale urban busing was a permissible remedy if necessary to produce integration in districts with a history of unconstitutional segregation. The Nixon Administration actively fought two of these three decisions and opposed the other in principle. Nonetheless, the court decisions brought a decisive change in levels of integration, particularly in the South and the Border States.

TABLE 9

CHANGES IN SEGREGATION LEVELS DURING 1968-1972 PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPREME COURT'S DECISIONS IN GREEN, HOLMES, AND SWANN CASES (FIRST NIXON ADMINISTRATION)

	Change in % of Black Students in:	
	PREDOMINANTLY MINORITY SCHOOLS	90-100% MINORITY SCHOOLS
South	-25.6	-53.1
Border	- 4.4	- 5.5
Northeast	+ 3.1	+ 4.2
Midwest	- 2.0	- .6
West	- 4.1	- 8.1
U.S. TOTAL	-13.0	- 25.6

The impact of those decisions outside the states with a history of de jure segregation was modest, in part, because the Supreme Court had not yet decided any cases concerning cities outside the Southern and Border regions. The first decision came in the 1973 Denver case but remedies were severely limited the next year in the 1974 case on desegregation of metropolitan Detroit (Milliken v. Bradley) There has never been a surge of Northern school desegregation to parallel what occurred in the South between 1965 and 1972.

The fact that changes in the policies of national administrations have not changed segregation levels significantly in the past several administrations does not mean that such policies can never have an impact. Johnson Administration enforcement greatly increased the levels of integration reported in every southern state between 1964 and 1968.(HEW Press Release, May 27, 1968, reporting southern statistics). The momentum of change stopped by the second Nixon Administration and all of President Nixon's appointees to the Supreme Court joined in the Milliken v. Bradley decision which created massive barriers to city-suburban desegregation.(418 U.S. 717). The second Reagan term may have stronger impacts on the pattern of school segregation than the first. The statistics do show, however, that the court decisions of the late 1960s and early 1970s did make a large difference and that there effects have been remarkably durable in spite of wide swings in the policies favored by the elected branches of government. There is clear evidence that separation of powers has been a reality in school desegregation policy and that the courts have not followed the election returns in applying the principles of desegregation policy established in those unanimous decisions taken a generation ago.

There may ultimately be large impacts of the Reagan policies, perhaps through the reconstitution of the courts. It may well be, on the other hand, that both the fact of desegregation and the law underlying it have become stable features of public education in those regions where it was accomplished a generation ago.

The Importance of the South. The South has always been the most important region in determining the situation of black education. The 1984 Education Department survey shows that 3,042,000 of the nation's 6,389,000 black students (47.6%), attend public schools in the eleven states of the South. The demographics of the South make desegregation a more difficult task. There is one black student for every 2.4 whites in the South. In the Northeast the ratio is one to 5.4 whites; in the Midwest it is one to 6.4 white students, and there are 9.3 white pupils for every black in the schools of the West. This means that it is necessary to involve a far higher proportion of whites to achieve the same level of integration that could be achieved in another region with a much lower level of white involvement. Even without considering the history of southern support for segregation, it might seem reasonable to expect a higher level of segregation in the South.

Forceful action by the Johnson Administration and the courts, however, made the South the nation's most integrated region for black students by 1970. The 1984 statistics show that the South has retained that distinction in the 1980's. The typical black student in the South is in school almost half again as high a fraction of whites as his black counterpart in the Northeast. The typical white student in the South is in a school with 17% blacks, while his counterparts in the Northeast, Midwest, and West attend schools with an average of 4-5% black enrollments. The pattern of integration changed very little in southern

schools from 1980-84. There were slight increases in the percent of minority students in the typical school attended by a southern black and in the fraction of blacks in schools with minority enrollments above 90%. On the other hand, there was also a slight increase in the fraction of blacks attending predominantly white schools. Overall, the pattern was virtually unchanged.

Experience of White Students. The increasing proportion of minority students in U.S. public schools means that even an unchanged level of desegregation tends to put white students in contact with more minority students. At a time when the Hispanic and Asian enrollments are growing much faster than black enrollments, the nature of the integration experienced by white students is becoming more complex and multi-racial. The following table shows that the proportion of blacks in the typical white school has risen modestly in all regions except the South in the 1980s and the proportion of Hispanics has increased in all regions. The multi-racial character of contemporary schooling is most apparent in the West where the typical school attended by a white student has about one-eighth Hispanic students, about one student in 23 who is Asian and one in 26 who is black. White students are increasingly exposed to interracial contact, often of a multiracial type that has received very little attention from either researchers or policymakers.

TABLE 10

Black, Hispanic and Asian Students in School of Typical White, by Region

1970, 1980, 1984

	Percent Black	Percent Hispanic	Percent Asian
SOUTH			
1970	14.9	2.8	NA
1980	17.5	4.1	NA
1984	16.9	4.2	1.1
BORDER			
1970	5.8	.3	NA
1980	8.3	.6	NA
1984	8.7	.9	1.0
NORTHEAST			
1970	4.5	1.4	NA
1980	4.8	2.3	NA
1984	5.1	2.6	1.7
MIDWEST			
1970	2.8	1.0	NA
1980	4.5	1.4	NA
1984	4.7	1.6	1.1
WEST			
1970	2.4	8.9	NA
1980	3.4	11.1	NA
1984	3.8	12.0	4.3

TABLE 11

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF
SCHOOL ATTENDED BY TYPICAL ASIAN,
HISPANIC AND BLACK STUDENT, 1984
CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

Race of Student	Percent WHITE	Percent BLACK	Percent HISPANIC	Percent ASIAN
Asian & Pacific	58.0	12.8	15.6	13.2
Hispanic	33.7	11.7	50.2	3.8
Black	35.8	55.6	6.6	1.7

School Integration and the Education of Asian-Americans.

The extraordinary educational success of Asian-American children in American public schools has been often noticed and compared to the severe educational problems of many black and Hispanic children. Some have attributed these differences to cultural values toward education (Sowell, 1981) while other scholars point to such factors as the high educational levels and social and economic backgrounds of many of the immigrants admitted under our highly selective immigration policies for Asian nationals. Statistics from this analysis cannot answer these questions but they do show that the typical student from these different racial and ethnic backgrounds attends a very different school. Both black and Hispanic students attend schools that have an average white enrollment of about one-third and large numbers are in almost completely segregated schools. Both attend schools where a majority of the children come from their own ethnic or racial background. In striking contrast, Asian students attend schools that, on average, have substantial white

majorities, only about one-eighth Asian students and small minorities of blacks and Hispanics. Asian students typically attend well-integrated public schools. Although this data shows nothing about the social and economic status of the school populations, the strong relationship between race and SES shown both by Census data and by studies of school enrollments suggest that Asian students are attending schools with far more middle class students from families with stronger educational backgrounds. (Walsh, 1986; Orfield and Mitzel, 1984; Johnson, 1986) It may well be that the fact that Asians have much more access to mainstream American public education contributes significantly to their rapid mobility.

Conclusion. There has been intense struggle over the expansion or reversal of the process of desegregation in American schools during the last generation. The data suggests that the result has been a stalemate and a consolidation of the vast changes in the Southern and Border states in the 1960s and 1970s. There has been little progress in desegregation of blacks in the North. Hispanics have become much more isolated in American schools. Future reports will show the degree to which individual states, cities, and metropolitan areas have moved toward increased or diminished integration.

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APPENDIX

DEFINITION OF REGIONS USED IN THIS STUDY: